



Preferences of and Attitudes Toward Treble Choral Ensembles

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Abstract

In choral ensembles, a pursuit where females far outnumber males, concern exists that females are being devalued. Attitudes of female choral singers may be negatively influenced by the gender imbalance that exists in mixed choirs and by the placement of the treble choir as the most select ensemble in a program. The purpose of this research was to determine student and choral educator perceptions of and attitudes toward treble choral ensembles.

Results support the existence of a stigma toward treble clef choirs as second-tier ensembles. A majority of students who were surveyed and interviewed chose the treble choir as their preferred ensemble in which to sing. Auditioned choir members viewed the treble clef choir as being even less prestigious than did the non-auditioned choir. Though almost all girls agreed that the competition for females to be members of treble choirs is far greater, well over half saw their male counterparts as musical equals. Choral educators and both male and female students agreed that a lack of focus from males exists in the choral rehearsal. Still, no female subjects mentioned that males were ignored or taken for granted. No subjects felt as though choral educators placed higher expectations for behavior and performance on females.

Introduction

The abundance of females in choral programs in the U.S. has gained much attention in recent years, with choral workshops and symposia with the focus typically being on how to achieve balance between vocal parts by recruiting and retaining males rather than the effect of the gender imbalance on the many female singers. The large number of females compared to males has led to the need for the formation of treble clef ensembles—all female vocal choirs, the status of which is often seen as second place to the mixed ensemble. According to O'Toole (1998), factors leading to this viewpoint include a more diverse historical literature, greater numbers of tours/competitions for mixed choirs, and the tendency of conductors to highlight the mixed ensemble by having them perform last on a program.

A traditional view of treble clef choirs focuses on the ensemble as a preparation for singing with high school treble clef choirs consisting of the "leftover" girls who were not selected for a mixed ensemble (Carp, 2004). A stigma as a second-tier ensemble is often attached to this choir, negatively affecting the attitudes of its members (Gautier, 2004).

Participation may be endured only until females are able to move on to mixed treble clef choir experience exists as nothing more than an opportunity to prove themselves worthy to sing in the mixed choir next year.

In the mixed choir rehearsal, as boys' and girls' voices mature at different times, directors may have to address the needs of the less experienced male singers during rehearsal, meanwhile neglecting the needs of female singers (O'Toole, 1998). As boys begin to mature vocally, boys are faced with new challenges that can make them less capable than their female counterparts. In some cases, to retain and encourage singers, choral educators ignore their inappropriate behavior. There is also concern that these behaviors play a role in monopolizing the choral educator's time and focus. Therefore, females may not be receiving the education they deserve. Placing less musically experienced girls in an ensemble with less trained boys may give the impression that female singers are less valuable.

In the mixed choral ensemble, choral educators' desire to obtain near even numbers between the sexes might result in many girls who are trained and interested left aside or assigned to treble clef choirs in order to compensate for the low number of males. Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 states that no one person, or sex, can be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of any educational program receiving federal financial assistance (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Meant to protect, in this case female singers are instead limited in their opportunity to participate in mixed choirs precisely because of the efforts toward gender equality. Rather than merely looking for strategies that will motivate students to continue in choral music, educators need to begin with the exploration of, and education regarding societal perpetuation of gender stereotypes in order to suppress proliferation these views (1993).

Review of Literature

The problem of imbalance of genders in choral music has existed since the 1980s (1989), but only recently has the question of how this affects females become a focus of music education research. Several journals including the *Philosophy of Music Review* (1994), *British Journal of Music Education* (1993), and *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning* (1993) all devoted issues to the topic of gender in music education. An organization called GRIME (Gender Research in Music Education) was established in 1991 and began publishing a peer-reviewed journal, G.E.M.S. (Gender, Education, Music and Society), in 2002. According to many of today's most prominent education researchers on the topic, music has long been considered a feminine field (Gould, 1992; Green, 1997; Koza, 1993/94; Lamb, 1994; O'Toole, 1998). According to Hanley (1998), girls more readily participate in choir because they do not feel that their role is being challenged as may be the case with boys.

Gender in Education and Music Education Research

Males and females are prepared to assume different roles in our society with females being rewarded for different behaviors starting early in life. Koza (1994) reports that females are often taught to be "sweet, passive, nice and meek" while males are socialized to use disruptive behavior in order to get attention (p. 75). Additionally, females are conditioned to "get along better, have more self-control, and be neater and more organized" (p. 75).



than boys" (Bank, 2007, p. 544). Males are expected to be powerful, strong, and logical while females are expected to be nurturing, cooperative and emot (Herndon and Ziegler, 1990).

The way that teachers adapt to deal with this behavior impacts classroom practice creating a teaching approach that favors the male population. Eder and Parke suggest that teachers often unconsciously promote gender segregation by assuming that boys will be "creative and independent" while girls are expected to be "well behaved and helpful" (p. 200). Trollinger (1993) suggests that teachers are more interactive with boys than girls, and Sadker and Sadker (1994) indicate that females receive even more attention as they get older. Teachers, likely without even knowing, tend to ask more questions of boys and give more detailed responses to males. Ashley (2009) and Gaskins (2009) suggest that girls exceed boys in the areas of ability to focus, reliability, motivation, and determination.

Reviewing articles related to sex/gender research in music education published between 1968 and 1992, Trollinger (1993) suggests that children begin to become aware of sex/gender identification at a young age and may associate being a boy with the inability to sing. A lack of role models may be part of the problem as female elementary music students outnumber their male counterparts. Even though girls possessed more positive attitudes toward music class, they were less likely to be rewarded for their achievement.

O'Toole (1998) suggests that girls are treated unfairly in choral ensembles through teacher interaction, male-centered repertoire choices, choral policies that sort students inequitably, and competitions for which boys may not need to compete at all. In such an event for which 112 sopranos, 65 altos, 23 basses and 15 tenors auditioned, with only 10 being selected for each voice part, O'Toole illustrates the national average of boys auditioning for honor choirs is 4:1 (1998). Expressing concern that girls may doubt their self-worth O'Toole suggests that the situation is doubly difficult with girls only getting to sing in top ensembles regardless of their ability, but because they are not encouraged to do so.

Lack of Male Participation in Choir

Peer pressure and the stereotype of choir as an effeminate activity are often to blame for the low numbers of males participating in choral programs. Demorest (2000) suggests that boys who stop singing in their school choirs often do so when their voices change. As girls begin to rapidly demonstrate vocal growth, boys are faced with new challenges that may make them appear less capable than their female counterparts.

Choir simply does not hold the same prestige as other high school activities (Irvine, 2000), and in today's culture, male singing in school and church choirs no longer holds the same popularity it did in colonial America when public singing was dominated by men (Gates, 1989). Sports have gained acceptance as a more socially acceptable activity, especially for young men (Harrison, 2003), and therefore, male students take part in sports rather than joining choir at a time of their lives when insecurities may already be overwhelming. In their eyes, singing in a choir may merely provide an alternative for those who are not athletic.

Green (1997) points out that boys, more often than girls, choose to avoid school activities. She gave four reasons for this tendency: 1) preference toward sports over music, 2) heavy peer pressure, 3) emphasis on what is musically "fashionable," and 4) lack of interest in music.

not necessarily describe school music), and 4) viewing certain musical activities and "un-macho" (p. 168).

Koza (1993) suggests that, stereotypically, a connection is made between male homosexuality and femininity and that students and adults alike view participation in music as a feminine activity. Because femininity and homosexuality are often viewed as synonymous, males who participate in music may become branded as homosexual. Homophobia has less to do with actual intolerance of homosexuality than it does with expressing disapproval of anyone who does not conform to "traditional" roles (Horn, 1993, p. 52). Sports provide one way for males to set a distinction for themselves by expressing the qualities opposite of those they consider to be feminine.

Attitudes Toward the Treble Ensemble

Gauthier (2005), director of the women's chorus at Western Michigan University, conducted a study of 48 males and 221 females, all members of the University's choral ensembles in a quest for data concerning attitudes toward women's choirs, and of the 221 women that responded, 90% preferred to sing in a women's choir. Subjects' explanations included the preference to be with males, appreciation for the depth in the choral sound with males singing, as well as a wider variety of music from which to draw, and a generally more challenging experience.

Respondents viewed the mixed ensemble in higher regard, believing it received more respect than the women's choir. Seventy-nine percent of females and 89% of males preferred mixed choirs as having the tradition of being the most prestigious group. In contrast, 11% of the 48 males that responded chose singing in an all-male ensemble as the primary reason for joining a choir, while 11% cited a "lack of emotional baggage" as a draw. Several women who were members of the women's choir mentioned the treble clef ensemble as a place where they felt comfortable and felt like they were part of a cohesive community.

While there is concern that females in mixed choirs suffer from instructional racism (Baker, 1994; O'Toole, 1998), this paper focuses on perceptions and attitudes of choral educators. I sought to uncover whether there was a bias against treble choirs as suggested by Carp (2004), and, if so, what was influencing this point of view.

Research Design

This qualitative study employed interviews with high school students and their directors as a form of inquiry. A purposive sample of four schools served as the sites for the interviews. Sites were chosen based on the existence of both a mixed and women's choir, as well as being within close proximity to the researcher. Three were 4A schools with 500 or more students in grades 9 – 11 as classified by the Iowa High School Music Association and the fourth was a 3A school (275 – 599 students in grades 9 – 11). Each school had a multi-tiered choral program with auditioned mixed ensembles, non-auditioned mixed ensembles and at least one treble clef choir. Three schools provided particular interest in that they recently changed the structure of their programs in order to make the treble choir the second most select ensemble.

Five students were interviewed one time at each of the four sites, with the exception of one school at which time constraints made it impossible to interview a male mixed ensemble member ($n = 4$ boys, $n = 15$ girls). The sample included freshman through seniors with a wide range of choral experience and ability. A maximum variation group

based on recommendations of the conductor and scheduling availability. In or the most information-rich cases and a wide range of viewpoints, one student at each site to fill the following descriptions: 1) a treble clef choir member, 2 auditioned mixed choir member, 3) a female non-auditioned mixed choir member, 4 male mixed choir member, and 5) a former women's choir member who is no longer in mixed choir. Each participant completed a student assent form, and those under 18 also submitted parental consent forms prior to their interview. By talking with students with differing experiences regarding choral participation, the negative attributes of treble clef choir were gauged from a variety of perspectives (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Student Interview Protocol

1) Tell me about your participation in choir.
2) In what choral ensemble do you currently participate? Formerly participated?
3) What type of choir would be your first choice?
4) Why do you think there are so few boys in choir?
5) What do you see as the pros and cons of having more males in choir?
6) Do you believe the repertoire for the women's choir and mixed choir are equally challenging? Or one is more challenging?
7) Do you believe the treble clef choir and mixed choir hold the same amount of prestige?
8) Do you believe males and females in the mixed choir demonstrate equal levels of choral skills?
9) Do you believe the competition to be a member of the mixed choir is the same for males and females?
10) Do you believe that your conductor treats males and females equitably?

The choral educator(s) of each program ($n = 7$) participated in a semi-structured dialogue concerning their treatment of and attitudes toward the treble clef choir. This dialogue allowed me to begin with basic questions that led to follow up questions, which led to further explain a theme or concept. The protocol included questions, which led to follow up questions that allowed each educator to further explain a theme or concept. Member checks were accomplished by sending transcripts to choral directors via email for their review.

Figure 2. Choral Director Interview Protocol

1) What is the ideal choral curriculum in terms of ensemble membership?
2) What have you observed regarding your students' attitudes toward treble clef choir?
3) What are the pros and cons of the treble clef choir?
4) What are the pros and cons of the mixed choir?

Results

Transcriptions were coded and the following themes were extracted: a preference for mixed choir, awareness of the lack of male singers in high school choral programs, the perception of greater choral ability among females than males, the perceived immaturity of male singers, the perception of greater choral ability among females than males, and the unequal amount of competition for males and females in choral groups at the high school level.

In addition to the above themes, three additional issues emerged that had not been explicitly addressed by the research questions. First, the notion that "choir is

the forefront immediately. Second, students and choral educators alike discuss being the opposite of sports. Finally, female students discussed a perceived lack of maturity in their male counterparts repeatedly. These ideas are embedded in what follows. Pseudonyms are used for students, choral educators, ensembles, and

Treble Clef or Mixed Choir Preference

Most female students reported that they would prefer to sing in a mixed choir stating a preference for singing in a treble clef ensemble stipulated that it be an ensemble. Two common responses included their appreciation for a) the sound a mixed choir can create and b) the quality and perceived higher level of difficulty in the chorus literature. Many expressed a desire to sing with males despite their perceived skill level and lesser work ethic.

A strong majority of the students who were interviewed viewed singing in a mixed choir as being more prestigious than singing in a treble clef ensemble. Choral educators reinforce this view by making the mixed ensemble the most select in their programs. No one named treble clef choir as being seen as the most prestigious ensemble. Most saw the treble clef choir as gaining status, but still viewed it as a "stepping stone" to be selected for participation in the mixed choir. Members got upset if they did not get to sing in the mixed choir. One conductor explained by saying, "They feel like it's stepping back into the 'slap in the face,' to have to sing in women's choir again after being in a mixed choir."

Missing Males

When asked why they thought there are so few boys in choir, many students responded that it is seen as a feminine activity and pointed to how singing is viewed by our society. The words "girly" and "gay" were used often. Peer pressure was frequently cited as a reason for not singing. Kate discussed the "rules we have in society that dictate what men and women are supposed to do. Guys are supposed to be athletic and strong and stuff like that. Girls are supposed to be more delicate and soft. Singing is seen as effeminate. It has a 'girly' vibe.' I don't know why. A lot of guys don't like to sing 'cause it's not a manly thing. You know how teenagers are."

Jaime articulated why she thought there were not more males in her school's choral program. Her answer reflected an ability to think outside the school environment. She responded, "Men are not really raised to pursue the arts. [Singing in a choir] is seen as not being very masculine." She, too, believed that there are societal "rules" about what men and women are supposed to do; participation in sports is an expectation for males. She imitated what she thought of as a stereotypical father saying, "It's expected for my son to be the quarterback/basketball player' not 'I want my son to grow up to be a singer/singer/singer.'"

Aaron, a senior, overcame these influences and started singing in school when he was in the seventh grade; he had been participating in choral ensembles ever since. At first, he reported feeling as though he had no idea what he was doing but, as the years went by, he "became aware of what to do and how to sing." Both his junior high and high school experiences consisted of singing in mixed choirs. Mixed choir is his only option; he does not sing in bass clef choir in Aaron's school program.

For many choral educators, this may not be viewed as a problem. Joe, one of the choral educators interviewed, was happy with the way the choral program at his school

structured. He liked having the freshman girls in a separate group and hoped add a freshman bass clef group as well to help in dealing with voice change is Ultimately, he felt that the existing choirs were adequate to provide the best education possible.

Male Immaturity

When asked to discuss the positive and negative outcomes of having more males, several females replied with behavior-related comments. One emerging theme was widespread mention of a perceived "male immaturity." Some expressed concern about the level of motivation if there were to be larger numbers of males in their mixed choirs, many pointing to a lack of desire on the part of males to put forth their full effort. "Distracted" was used on many occasions. Anna shared, "I wish I could say that the males are more hardworking). I know a lot of guys in band can do it because they know it." Mainly girls are the know-it-alls." Her choral educator did not disagree. "I think they learn a lot quicker. It's a developmental thing. They have a keener way of attuning themselves to the idea a lot quicker. The guys tend to be more goofy. It's a natural thing." Beth agreed that there were too many guys in the mixed choir who "know it." Many females viewed males as not working up to their potential; they saw the lack of effort as apathy.

One discrepant theme did emerge; there were a few females who disagreed with the majority and believed that the males who chose to sing in choir were there because they really wanted to be. One stated, "If there is a boy in choir, it means he's really going to work really hard." These girls did not share the frustration of some of the other girls, but lauded their male classmates, believing that if they went against the "norms" of the choir, they weren't there to "fool around."

Equality of Choral Skills

Most of the female subjects believed females have more advanced choral skill than males, and all of the others felt as though females and males demonstrated equal levels of skill. Most subjects discussed not just ability, but desire and work ethic when addressing whether they thought females or males had a higher level of choral proficiency. Most quickly answered that they thought there were far more talented girls than boys, "because more women do it from a young age or have an innate ability." Anna added, "In our group the girls learn it a lot quicker." Several said they believed talent was not gender-specific. Still, no participants (including males) mentioned boys being more musically talented than girls. Show choir seems to present another issue for females, as one simply stated, "guys can't dance."

Competition for Males vs. Females

Both choral educators and students discussed how it was more difficult for females to be selected for auditioned mixed choirs than it was for males. The girls knew that they were going to have to work harder to be able to sing in a mixed ensemble. There simply were not as many males auditioning for choir. According to one of the conductors, "I know it's a process and that it's more 'cutthroat' in ladies choirs. The number of males is smaller and you have to work really hard and really stand out to make that transition."

Carrie discussed whether males and females had an equal chance of being selected for a mixed choir saying, "[It's] a lot harder for girls. If you're a guy who can carry

basically make it." Both she and her sister Cathy had the experience of auditioning for the first time. At that point, they sought extra help through private lessons and were successful at the next year's auditions. From this experience, they learned that "for girls it's a lot of different stuff—tone, pitch, blend, dynamics. You have to work on it all." According to Kate, "The boys are good in Chamber Choir, but it's frustrating for girls to try for three years and may not get in as seniors." Amanda agreed that there was a better opportunity in audition situations because there were less of them who dedicated and, therefore, had the desire to audition.

Brad was one of those boys who were still singing as seniors because they possessed a high level of choral skill. He was also an athlete and scholar who saw choral music as a hobby that he could enjoy doing for the rest of his life, unlike football. He had been singing in Chamber Choir since his sophomore year and spoke of successes that had encouraged him to keep singing despite the importance placed on sports at his school. Brad explained that after the recent restructuring of the choral program to make the treble clef show choir the first choice, he felt that it was a positive change, but admitted that the change had not affected him personally. He believed that males did not have as much competition to sing in the treble choir as females, but gave the impression that he never used that information as a reason not to put forth his full effort.

Discussion

While not the answer to every problem, it was interesting to note that choral directors at three of the four schools had recently successfully restructured their program by auditioning treble ensembles. These new configurations were reported to have had positive changes by both choral educators and students; the hierarchy of ensembles was explained to me several times. In all three schools, the treble choir was thought to be more prestigious than the junior varsity mixed ensembles, but still second to the varsity ensemble.

At Kennedy High School, the program had been restructured a year earlier to make the treble choir the first choice. One of the co-directors, Jerry explained the importance of the position; "We had very inexperienced gentlemen with girls who could basically circle around those guys." In his eyes, making the change gave the upper level singers of their own and provided them with the opportunity to perform more challenging music with choreography and music without the boys' inexperience hindering them. Jerry explained that, "the girls shouldn't be held back by freshmen guys" and went on to say that, "the girls singing with more mature women" helped keep the boys focused. In his view, the female singers, Jerry remarked, "they're all so good; they shouldn't be held back by clumsy guys." He pointed out that, in the curricular choirs at his school, the gentlemen were working with more experienced ladies right away. He also mentioned that he had observed it was usually the girls who were feeling more like a "number" in the new structure in place, "I feel like the system set up now really is keyed into the development as singers."

Women's Chorus, a select treble ensemble, had also been a recent addition to the program. Jerry mentioned that the change met resistance at first. Members of the ensemble said they did not "get into" Chamber Choir. Jane believed being in the new treble choir was a "step up" from Mixed Choir and she thought the recent change had been a success. She believed it would "allow us to take it to the next level."

The choral program had also recently been restructured at Roosevelt High School to create an auditioned ensemble for female singers. Bob, who was the head director before Robin was hired as a co-director, considered the needs of his female singers when making his decisions. He stated, "we have so many women; they're on the lookout for us." He believed these girls needed a place to be where they did not feel like "leftovers" and could be challenged without the impediment of less mature members. In his estimation, the girls were not thriving and getting what they needed in that now-dumbed-down ensemble. In the past, Bob had begun to notice that the girls were becoming very frustrated with their young male counterparts. According to Robin, it took little time, but the girls' group is surprisingly good and other select girls are eager for younger girls to be part of it." Jessie, one of the treble choir members, thought that the choral educators described it—as the "varsity women's choir"—made it sound like a quality ensemble.

Similar to Kennedy and Roosevelt, Jefferson's inclusion of an auditioned treble choir was a recent change. The choral educator, Bob, recalled that the year prior there was an abundance of advanced girls and he sought to give them a "different outlet." The ensemble was in its second year of existence at the time of my visits. Both the students and the teacher seemed pleased with the change.

Bill remembered the existence of a negative attitude toward the ensemble when he first heard of it, but explained that it quickly changed. In its second year of existence the ensemble doubled in number. He believed that one contributing factor to the ensemble's success was related to the avoidance of considering it the bottom of a "three-tiered system." As Bella Voce began to receive recognition from concert audiences, they were no longer seen as "second place," but their own unique type of group. He considered the treble choir to be one of his finest ensembles.

Synthesis of Findings

Two points of focus were drawn from my experiences and supported by the literature on the topic. First, a stigma could be attached to the treble choir as a second-place ensemble (Gauthier, 2005; O'Toole, 1998). Second, the gender imbalance in mixed choirs has been shown to negatively affect the attitudes of female choral singers (Gates, 1989; O'Toole, 1998). The third theme, that choral educators may neglect female singers as they focus their attention on males (Koza, 1993; O'Toole, 1998; Trollinger, 1993), was not confirmed in this study.

Female students participating in student interviews indicated a strong preference for singing in a mixed choir. In programs where there was more than one choir, the treble choir was seen as the top ensemble in the choral hierarchy. Students and choral educators alike viewed the competition to be in a mixed choir as more competitive for females than for males, confirming existing reports from Van Camp (1988) and O'Toole, (1998). Females who were not selected for the top mixed choir, and were instead members of a treble choir, spoke of being seen as second place to the mixed ensemble, but this did not affect their confidence. They continued to sing even though they were not chosen for the top select ensemble.

The girls I interviewed were smart, confident regarding their choral skills, quick to answer questions, and willing to offer suggestions. If they were initially upset at being

treble clef ensemble, they took it as a challenge to prove themselves as choristers. No female students reported feeling unsuccessful, but I should point out that those who were interviewed were those still participating in choral ensembles.

Both students and choral educators pointed to singing being seen as an "effort" and an undertaking to explain the lack of males singing in choral programs. Their responses provide support to Gates's (1989), Mizener's (1993), Green's (1997) and Han's (1997) discussions of choir as a feminine endeavor. Some students used the term "girls" to describe the view of males in choir. Koza (1993) explained that a connection between male homosexuality and femininity. Harrison (2003) too, agreed and stated that homophobia has less to do with actual intolerance of homosexuality, and more with expressing disapproval of anyone who does not conform to "traditional" roles.

Students and choral educators also discussed the perceived belief that males have lesser choral skills than females as well as the tendency for males to behave inappropriately in rehearsal. Female students questioned whether males took this because they did not have to work as hard to be members of the top mixed ensemble.

Data collected for this study closely paralleled those of Gauthier's (2005) survey. Explanations for subjects' answers. In both cases, a high percentage of females chose the mixed choir as their preferred ensemble. Students did not necessarily prefer mixed choir to be a more challenging experience, but mixed choir was viewed as a select choir in each program. The traditional view of treble and bass clef ensemble preparation for SATB singing presumes that girls sing in treble choir and move to bass choir when the opportunity arises. This became apparent in my study through which the girls' work ethic was described as a drive to "prove themselves" so as to be selected for the mixed ensemble the next year. At Jefferson in particular, I recorded the Bella Voce members a sense of pride and desire to bond together to be in the top choir. Still, two of the girls responded emotionally when expressing their desire to be in the mixed choir. Perhaps the preference can be attributed to the tradition of the mixed choir as the most celebrated ensemble.

While results of this study cannot be generalized to a larger population due to the small sample size and specific location, I must cast some doubt on the idea that placing more mature, experienced female singers in a mixed ensemble with younger males makes the girls feel inferior. Singers who participated in the survey and interviews seemed to be so eager to be in the mixed choir that they were willing to overlook any negatives. Surprisingly, while all female participants agreed that the competition for females in choral music is high, well over half saw their male counterparts as musical equals. No females mentioned that they were ignored or taken for granted.

Suggestions for Further Research

Further research is needed to better determine the implications for music education. Successful treble choir programs should be examined and educators should be encouraged to scrutinize their current practices. This study was limited to a relatively small sample of Midwest high schools and, therefore, cannot be generalized to the population. It may be valuable to replicate the study in another part of the country, as students in more metropolitan areas may be less conservative in their views regarding homosexuality.

While several expected threads presented themselves, it seems as though the generally seen as a problem among choral directors of female singers. It is still that girls will have to work harder to "get into" mixed ensembles, honor choir choirs, musicals, etc. Perhaps education about this phenomenon will lessen discrimination for females placed in treble ensembles due to a lack of male singers.

More research is needed to determine whether structuring the program to make ensembles more select makes a difference. Self-esteem and choral identity is influenced by ensemble placement. Success in performance seems to play a role in bolstering singers' pride and confidence in the ensemble. Offering our treble choirs the same opportunities for performance and travel may make all the difference. Perhaps giving credit for treble clef choir would elevate the status of the ensemble. Our girls feel as though they are talented and worthy musicians. I hope this study will bring to light an area of concern that may go unnoticed by choral educators who have traditionally focused on keeping males in their choral ensembles. Educators must always consider what is educationally most beneficial for their students and not just rely on traditional practices. What some may consider a question of having the appropriate "instrument" for a choral ensemble may truly be an issue with gender discrimination at its core. Educators must strive to provide equal opportunities for all students.

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